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NSC BRIEFING

5 OCTOBER 1955

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23 OCTOBER SAAR REFERENDUM

- I. In a little over two weeks from now, the Saarlanders will hold a referendum on acceptance or rejection of the "European Statute," *Under this statute,* the Saar's defense and foreign affairs would be the responsibility of the Western European Union; the 1000 sq. mi. area would achieve internal political autonomy; and close economic ties to France would be continued.
- A. Rejection would have serious consequences for French-German relations, since the "European Statute" is part of France's price for the Paris Accords "package" (which permitted West German rearmament).

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IV. A vigorous--and sometimes ~~violent~~--anti-"Statute" campaign in the Saar has ruled out earlier expectations, which foresaw approval by a substantial majority.

* Pro-German parties, banned in the Saar until the referendum campaign opened in late July, have whipped up much nationalist sentiment among the million Saarlanders (almost all of whom are German).

* The pro-German parties argue that, should the "Statute" be rejected, France can then be forced to make an agreement on the Saar more favorable to German interests.

General



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the strongly Catholic Saar, have indirectly indicated disapproval of the "Statute" by failure to disavow pro-German propaganda claims that the Church opposes it.

E. The only known poll (taken in early Sep) showed a heavy majority of Saarlanders opposed to the "Statute."

III. However, in the past month, pro-"Statute" forces--led by Saar premier Johannes Hoffmann and his large Christian People's Party--have staged a counterattack.

A. Pro-"Statute" campaigners are stressing the lack of an effective alternative to the projected settlement, and plugging the Saar's better economic prospects under the "Statute."

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B. Early rowdyism of the anti-"Statute" campaign has alienated some Saarlanders who were originally inclined to oppose the "Statute."

C. A statement by the papal emissary in Saarbrücken, on 27 Sep, *in which he said,* ("vote according to your conscience") has deflated claims by pro-German leaders that the Church opposes the "Statute."

D. Hoffman's Christian People's Party has shown its confidence in a favorable outcome by voting almost unanimously in a 2 Oct party congress not to reverse its position favoring the "Statute" (such a repudiation had been urged for party tactical reasons).

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[REDACTED], has privately predicted (in mid-Sep) a 60% favorable vote, although both French and German politicians are less sanguine.

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IV. Whatever the outcome, the emotion generated by the campaign is raising political dangers in the Saar.

A. Should the "Statute" win approval, ^{but} only by ^A narrow margin, pro-German disturbances might follow.

^{HOWEVER,}
1. ^A An expected announcement by WEU of its intention to create a special international police force, ready to intervene in the Saar should disturbances develop, will probably have a restraining effect on pro-German bully boys.

2. Under these circumstances, the pro-Germans would probably confine themselves to a campaign to vote Hoffmann out of office in the special 4 Dec '55 Landtag elections.

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D. Should the "Statute" be ~~rejected~~ by a narrow margin, the French
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would be encouraged to reimpose direct controls, to include the
banning of pro-German parties and putting off the Landtag elections
until they are next regularly scheduled (1957).

1. Any such French reimposition of controls would infuriate
West German opinion. Adenauer's foreign policy would suffer
a blow over the collapse of such a key element in the present
French-German rapprochement.

2. If the "Statute" is rejected by a substantial margin, it is likely
that the French would accept some arrangement for temporary continu-
ation of WEU control of the Saar, pending negotiation of a new
agreement.

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V. It is still possible that the referendum will be postponed. This possibility may have been discussed at yesterday's (5 Oct) meeting of Faure and Adenauer.

- A. French see postponement as a means of making the electorate more fully informed on consequences of the vote.
- B. Timing of ^{the} announcement on WEU international police may also have been part of Faure-Adenauer talks.
- C. A third subject may have been a French-proposed joint French-German "declaration" on the forthcoming referendum.
- D. However, we have not yet received any details of the Faure-Adenauer meeting.